Transition phases for teens moving to adult care

Use this checklist to navigate the three transition phases for teenagers moving from paediatric to adult health care.

Phase 1: early transition

This phase covers the time from diagnosis to 12 years.

Your child will get care from:

- a GP
- general and/or specialist clinics
- paediatricians
- a children’s hospital
- other health care specialists.

Phase 2: preparation for transition

This phase happens when your child is 12-16 years old.

Your child will get care from:

- a GP
- general and/or specialist clinics
- paediatricians/specialists
- a children’s hospital
- adolescent clinics (where available)
- other health care specialists.

What to expect

Health care professionals will evaluate your child’s ability to manage her own health care and monitor her progress.

At around this age, your child will probably start to be offered time alone with his doctors and other health care professionals during appointments.

What to do

- Start talking about transition with your child and her health care professionals.
- Draw up a transition plan – by the time your child is 14.
- Start educating your child about his condition or disability. Seek help from your child’s health care professionals if you need it.
- If you don’t already have one, find a GP for your child. In future, your child’s GP will be able to liaise with the adult health care system.
- Depending on your child’s readiness and maturity, encourage and help her to arrange her own health care appointments.
Discuss potential future referrals in the adult care system with your child’s health care professionals.
Arrange for your child to have his own Medicare card, from the age of 15.
Help your child decide what she wants to go into her My Health Record and who she wants to have access to it, from the age of 14.
Consider whether you want to use the public or private health care system.

Phase 3: active transition

This phase happens when your child is 16-19 years old.

Your child will get care from:

- a GP
- general clinics
- adolescent clinics (where available)
- paediatricians
- a children’s hospital
- other health care specialists.

What to expect

A focus on transition needs to be part of your child’s overall care during this phase.

A detailed transition plan is essential for a smooth transition to adult care. Your health professionals should work with you to create a written transition plan that includes instructions on what to do in emergencies.

Your child should receive detailed information about adult services (both verbal and written) at least a year before the transition date. Your paediatric health care team should send a transition referral letter to the adult service and a copy to your child’s GP, along with medical notes or summaries. If your area has a transition care coordinator, a copy can also be sent to this person to ensure follow-up. It’s a good idea to ask for a copy to keep yourself.

Ideally your child’s lead clinician – that is, a paediatrician, nurse, or a member of the health care team – will make the first appointment with adult services for your child.

What to do

- Hold joint consultations with the child and adult health teams throughout this phase.
- Where appropriate, support your child to have parts of his medical consultations alone, with family and carers invited to join afterwards. This will help your child develop his self-management skills.
- Talk with your child before appointments and encourage her to make a list of things she might want to ask about, for example what to do about a school camp that’s coming up.
- Encourage your child to ask questions during appointments.
- Work with health care professionals to set up appointments for your child to visit the adult service and meet the staff before the transition date.
After transition: transfer to adult services

This happens when your child is 18-19 years old.

Your child will get care from:

- a GP
- adolescent or young adult clinics (in adult services where available)
- adult health care systems
- other health care specialists.

What to expect

In most cases individualised medical treatment will become the norm for your child.

Health professionals will increasingly encourage your child to manage his own care (where appropriate).

Where available and if necessary, the transition care coordinator can follow up to see how your child is going in the adult health care system.

What to do

☐ Organise the transfer of any financial health care arrangements, including family private health care cover – by the time of formal transfer.
☐ If your child needs it, help her to make individual appointments with specialists or specialist clinics.
☐ Your child will need his own Medicare Card by this phase. Your child can get his own card from the age of 15 years.